

# The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah

Before I go about elucidating the implications of the wisdom of Kabbalah, conversed upon by many, I find it necessary to begin with clarifying the essence of this wisdom, which I believe so few know. And naturally, it is impossible to speak of the implications of some thing before we know the thing itself.

Although this knowledge is wider and deeper than the ocean, I will make an utmost effort, with all the strength and knowledge I have acquired in this field, to clarify and illuminate it from all angles, enough for any soul to draw the right conclusions, as they truly are, leaving no room for error, as is often the case in such matters.

## What Does the Wisdom Revolve Around?

That question comes to the mind of every right-minded person. In order to properly address it, I will provide a reliable and lasting definition, that this wisdom is no more and no less, than a sequence of roots, which hang down by way of cause and consequence, in fixed, determined rules, interweaving to a single, exalted goal described as – “the revelation of His Godliness to His creatures in this world.”

And here there is the conduct of particular and general:

General - meaning the whole of mankind, obligated to eventually come to this immense evolvement, as it says: “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11, 9). “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jeremiah 31, 33). “Yet thy Teacher shall not hide Himself any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teacher” (Isaiah 30, 20).

Particular - meaning that even before the perfection of all mankind, this rule is carried out in particular individuals. They are the ones who are endowed, in each generation, with a certain amount of revelation of His Godliness. These are the prophets and the men of God.

And as our sages said: “There is no generation, which has not such men as Abraham and Jacob.” Thus you see that the revelation of His Godliness is carried out in each generation, as our sages, whom we find trustworthy, proclaim.

## The Multiplicity of *Partzufim, Sefirot and Worlds*

However, according to the above, a question arises - since this wisdom has but the above unique task, then why is there the matter of the multiplicity of *Partzufim, Sefirot* and interchangeable connections, which are so abundant in the books of Kabbalah?

Indeed, if you take the body of a small animal, whose only task is to sustain itself, that it may exist in this world, and father and carry on its species, you will find in it complexity much greater than a million fibers and tendons, as physiologists discovered, and there is so much more for humans yet to find there. From the above you can conclude the vast variety of compositions needed to connect, in order to invent and to reveal that sublime end.

## Two Conducts: From Above Downward and From Below Upward

The wisdom of Kabbalah is generally divided into two parallel identical orders like two drops in a pond. The only difference between them is that the first order is drawn from above downward to this world and the second order travels from below upward, precisely through the same routes and make-ups imprinted at the root when they appeared from above downward.

The former conduct is called - “the order of descent of the worlds, *Partzufim* and *Sefirot*,” with all their occurrences, whether lasting or transient. The latter is called - “attainments or degrees of prophecy and Holy Spirit”, that a person who attains it, is compelled to follow the same paths and attain each detail and each degree, step by step, precisely by the same rules that were imprinted in them upon their emanation from above downwards.

A revelation of Godliness does not appear at once, but gradually, over a period of time, depending on the cleansing of the perceiver, until all the degrees from above downward are revealed, and because they come in an order of attainment, one after the other and one above the other, as do rungs of a ladder, they are called degrees (steps).

## Abstract Names

Many believe that all the names and the words in the wisdom of Kabbalah are a kind of abstract names. It is so because it deals with Godliness and spirituality, which are above time and space, where even our imagination has not a hold. For that reason they have decided that surely, these matters speak of abstract names, or even more sublime and exalted than abstract names, as they are completely and from the outset, devoid of imaginary elements.

But that is not the case. On the contrary: Kabbalah uses only names that are concrete and real. It is an unbending rule for all Kabbalists that, “Anything we do not attain, we do not define by a name and a word.”

Here you must know that the word “attainment” (Heb: *Hasaga*) implies the ultimate degree of understanding. It derives from the phrase - “that thy hand shall reach” (Heb: *Ki Tasig Yadcha*). That means that before something becomes utterly lucid, as though gripped in one’s hand, the Kabbalists do not consider it attained, but understood, comprehended and so on.

## The Actuality of the Wisdom of Kabbalah

Actual things are found even in the corporeal reality, set before our eyes, though we have neither perception nor image of their essence. Such are the electricity and the magnet, called “fluidum.”

Nevertheless, who can say that these names are not real, when we vividly and satisfactorily know their actions? We could not be more indifferent to the fact that we cannot conceive the essence of the subject itself, namely electricity itself.

This name is as tangible and as close to us, as though it were entirely perceived in our senses. Even little children are familiar with the word “electricity” as well as they are familiar with words such as: bread, sugar, and so on.

Moreover, if you wish to exercise your tools of scrutiny a bit, I shall tell you that as a whole, as there is no perception of the Creator whatsoever, so is it impossible to

attain the essence of any of His creatures, even the tangible objects that we feel with our hands.

Our whole acquaintance with our friends and relatives in the world of action before us is nothing more than “acquaintance with their actions”. These are prompted and born from their association of the encounter with our senses. They render us complete satisfaction though we have no perception in the essence of the subject.

Furthermore, you have no perception and attainment whatsoever even in your own essence. Anything you know about your own essence is nothing more than a series of actions extending from your essence.

Now you can easily deduce that all the names and appellations that appear in books of Kabbalah are indeed real and factual although we have no attainment in the subject matter whatsoever. It is thus because those who engage in it are completely satisfied with their inclusive perception of its ultimate wholeness, meaning a mere perception of actions, prompted and born of the association of the Upper Light and its perceivers.

However, it is quite sufficient, for this the rule: “All that is measured and extracted from His providence so as to be realized into the nature of creation, is of complete sufficiency.” Similarly, one cannot claim a sixth finger in his hand, because the five are quite sufficient.

## **The Corporeal Terms and the Physical Names in Books of Kabbalah**

Any reasonable person will understand that when dealing with spiritual matters, much less Godliness, we haven’t any words or letters with which to contemplate. This is because our entire vocabulary is but combinations of the letters of our senses and imagination. Yet, how can they be of assistance where there are neither imagination nor senses?

Even if we take the subtlest word that can be used in this context, meaning the word “Upper Light”, or even “Simple Light”, it is still borrowed and lent from the light of the sun, or a candle, or a light of contentment one feels upon resolving some great doubt, or new invention. How can we use them in context of the spiritual and Godly? They offer the examiner nothing more than falsehood and deceit.

It is particularly so where one needs to find some ratio in these words to help one in the negotiation customary in the research of the wisdom. Here one must be very strict and accurate using definitive descriptions for the eyes of the observers.

Should the wise fail with but a single unsuccessful word, he is certain to confuse and mislead the readers. They will not understand at all what he is saying there, before it, after it, and everything connected to that word. This is known to anyone who examines books of wisdom.

Thus, one should wonder how is it possible for Kabbalists to use false words in order to explain the interconnections of this wisdom? Also, it is known that there is no definition through a false name, for the lie has no legs and no stance.

Indeed, here you need to have prior knowledge of the Law of Root and Branch by which the worlds relate to one another.

## The Law or Root and Branch by which the Worlds Relate to One Another

Kabbalists have found that the form of the four worlds, named *Atzilut*, *Beria*, *Yetzira*, *Assiya*, beginning with the first and highest world, called *Atzilut*, and ending in this corporeal, tangible world, called *Assiya*, is exactly the same in every item and event. It means that everything that eventuates and occurs in the first world is found unchanged in the second world below it too. It is likewise in all the worlds that follow it, down to this tangible world.

There is no difference between them, merely a different degree, perceived in the substance of each world's reality. The substance of the items of the first, uppermost world is purer than the substance of the lower ones. And the substance of the items of reality of the second world is coarser than that of the first, but purer than all that is of lower degree.

It continues similarly down to this world before us, whose substance of the items of reality is coarser and darker than all the worlds preceding it. However, the shapes and the items of reality and all their occurrences come unchanged and equal in every world, both in quantity and quality.

They compared it to the conduct of a seal and its imprint. All the shapes found in the seal are transferred perfectly in every detail and intricacy to the imprinted object. So it is with the worlds where each lower world is an imprint of the world above it. Hence, all the forms found in the higher world, are meticulously copied, in both quantity and quality, to the lower world.

Thus there is not an item of reality, or an occurrence of reality found in a lower world that you will not find its likeness in the world above it, as identical as two drops in a pond, and they are called "Root and Branch". That means that that item found in the lower world is deemed a branch of its pattern, found in the higher world, being the root of the lower item, as this is where that item in the lower world was imprinted and made to be.

That was the intention of our sages when they said, "You haven't a blade of grass below that has not a fortune and a guard above that strike it and command it to grow". It follows that the root, called "fortune", compels it to grow and robe its attribute in quantity and quality, as with the seal and the imprint. This is the law of Root and Branch in every item of reality in every single world, relating to the world above it.

## The Language of the Kabbalists is a Language of Branches

Meaning that the branches indicate to their roots, being their molds that necessarily exist in the upper world. This is because there is no reality in the lower world that is not elicited from its superior. As with the seal and the imprint, the root in the upper world compels its branch in the lower one to reveal its entire form and feature, as our sages said that the fortune in the world above, related to the grass in the world below, strikes it, forcing it to complete its growth. Because of that, each and every branch in this world, well defines its mold, situated in the higher world.

Thus Kabbalists have found a set and annotated vocabulary before their eyes, sufficient to create an excellent spoken language. It enables them to converse with one another of the dealings in the spiritual roots in the upper worlds by merely mentioning the tangible branch in this world that is well defined to our corporeal senses.

The listeners understand the upper root to which this corporeal branch points through their own attainment because it is related to it, being its imprint. Thus, all the beings of the tangible creation and all their instances have become to them like well-defined words and names. They indicate to their higher spiritual roots. Although there cannot be a verbal expression in their spiritual setting, as it is above any imagination, they have earned the right to be expressed by utterance through their branches, arranged before our senses here in the tangible world.

That is the nature of the spoken language among Kabbalists, by which they convey their spiritual attainments from person to person and from generation to generation, both by word of mouth and in writing. They fully understand one another, with the required accuracy needed for negotiating the study of the wisdom with precise definitions one cannot fail in. This is so because each branch has its own unique, absolute and natural definition. This absolute definition naturally indicates to its root in the higher world.

Bear in mind, that this Language of the Branches of the wisdom of Kabbalah is better suited to explain the terms of the wisdom than all our ordinary tongues. It is known from the theory of nominalism, that the languages have been disrupted in the mouths of the crowd. In other words, due to excessive use of the words, they have been emptied of their accurate content, resulting in great difficulties to convey precise deductions to one another, either by word of mouth or in writing.

This is not case with the Language of the Branches since it is derived from the names of the creations and their occurrences, set before our eyes, defined by the unchangeable laws of nature. The readers and the listeners will never be misled into a misunderstanding of the words before them because the natural definitions are utterly unwavering and cannot be breached.

### **Conveyance From a Wise Kabbalist to an Understanding Receiver**

Thus wrote the RAMBAN in his introduction to his commentary on the Torah: “and I bring with true covenant to all who scrutinize this book, that of all the clues that I write in the secrets of the Torah, I resolutely assert that my words will not be grasped by any mind or intelligence, except from the mouth of a wise Kabbalist to the ear of an understanding receiver”. Such as that Rabbi Chaim Vital wrote in his introduction to The Tree of Life, and also in the words of our sages (Hagiga, 11): “One does not study the Kabbalah on one’s own, unless he is wise and understands with his own mind”.

It is thoroughly understood when they say that one must receive from a wise Kabbalist. But why the necessity for the disciple to first be wise and understanding with his own mind? Moreover, if he isn’t so, then he must not be taught, be he the most righteous person in the world. In addition, if one is already wise and understands with his own mind, what need has he to learn from others?

From the aforesaid their words are understood with utter simplicity: we have seen that all the words and utterances our lips pronounce cannot help us convey even a single word from the spiritual, Godly matters, above the imaginary time and space. Instead, there is a special language for these matters, being The Language of the Branches, indicating their relation to their Upper Roots.

However, this language, though extremely suitable for its task of delving in the studies of this wisdom, is only so if the listener is wise in his own right, meaning that he knows and understands the way the branches relate to their roots. It is because

these relations are not at all clear when looking from the lower upwards. In other words, it is impossible to deduce any semblance in the Upper Roots by looking at the lower branches.

Quite the contrary, the lower is studied from the higher. Thus, one must first attain the Upper Roots, the way they truly are in spirituality, above any imagination, but with pure attainment. Once he has thoroughly attained the Upper Roots through his own mind, he may examine the tangible branches in this world and know how each branch relates to its root in the Upper World, in arrangement, in quality and quantity.

When one knows and thoroughly comprehends all that, there is a common language between him and his teacher, namely The Language of the Branches. Using it, the wise may convey the studies of the wisdom, conducted in the Upper, Spiritual Worlds, both the ones he had received from his teachers and the ones he had discovered by himself. This is because now they have a common language and they understand each other.

However, when a disciple is not wise and comprehends the language on his own, meaning how the branches indicate to their roots, naturally, the teacher cannot convey even a single word of this spiritual wisdom, much less negotiate with him in the scrutiny of the wisdom. This is so because they have not a common language they can use, and they become like mute. Thus, it is necessary that the wisdom of Kabbalah will not be taught unless he is wise and understands with his own mind.

We must ask further: How then, has the disciple grown so wise as to know the relation of branch and root through tracing the Upper Roots? The answer is that here one's efforts are in vain; it is God's help that we need! He fills those who capture His keen with wisdom, understanding and knowledge to acquire sublime attainments. Here it is impossible to be assisted by any flesh and blood!

Indeed, once He has grown fond of a person, and has endowed him with the sublime attainment, one is then prepared to accept the vastness of the wisdom of Kabbalah from a wise Kabbalist, for now they have a common language.

## **Appellations Alien to Human Spirit**

With all that is said above, you will understand why we sometimes find appellations and terms quite alien to the human spirit in books of Kabbalah. They are abundant in the fundamental Kabbalah books, which are the Zohar, the corrections to the Zohar and the books of the Ari. It is indeed bewildering why these wise men used such lowly appellations to express such exalted, holy notions?

Yet, you will fully understand it once you have acquired the above conceptions. This is because it is now clear that no language in the world can be used to explain that wisdom, except one that is intended for just that end, namely The Language of the Branches, relating to their upper roots.

Thus, obviously, no branch, or fraction of a branch, should be neglected because of its inferior degree, or not be used to express the desired concept in the interconnections in the wisdom, as there is no other branch in this world to take its place.

As no two hairs suck from the same foramen, so we do not have two branches that relate to a single root. Hence, by leaving an incident unused we lose the spiritual concept corresponding to it in the Upper World, as we have not a single word to utter in its place and indicate that root. In addition, such an incident would impair the entire

wisdom in all its vastness, since now there is a missing link in the chain of the wisdom connected to that concept.

Thus it mutilates the entire wisdom for there is no other wisdom in the world where matters are so fused and intertwined, by way of cause and effect, primary and consequential, as is the wisdom of Kabbalah, connected head to toe just like a long chain. Therefore, upon the temporary loss of but a small cognizance, the entire wisdom darkens before our eyes for all its issues are tied to one another very strongly, literally fusing into one.

Now you will not wonder at the occasional use of alien appellations. It is so because they have no freedom of choice with appellations, to replace the bad with the good, or the good with the bad. They must always use the branch or the incident, which precisely points to its upper root in all its necessary measure. Moreover, the subject matters must be expanded so as to provide an accurate definition for the eyes of their fellow observers.